



U.S. Department of Justice

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Eastern District of Arkansas*

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JURY FINDS THOMPSON AND BAGGETT GUILTY OF FIREARMS CHARGES

Little Rock - Jane W. Duke, the United States Attorney for the Eastern District of Arkansas; Phil Durham, Special Agent in Charge of the New Orleans Field Division of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms & Explosives ("ATF"); and Valerie Parlave, Special Agent in Charge of the Little Rock Division of the Federal Bureau of Investigation announced that a jury convicted George W. Thompson, 65 of Cabot, of being a felon in possession of firearms and ammunition, possessing an unregistered silencer, operating an illegal gambling business and conspiring to do the same, and of aiding and abetting marriage fraud. The jury also convicted Thompson and Samuel Gaylon Baggett, 58, a sitting alderman in the city of North Little Rock, of conspiring with one another to dispose of ammunition to a felon. Baggett was also convicted of aiding and abetting a felon in possession of a firearm (Thompson) and of making a false statement to ATF and FBI agents.

Duke stated, "While a significant aspect of it, this investigation involved so much more than just sports betting. As a result of the wiretaps, evidence was developed linking George Thompson and his associates to a variety of criminal activities. The coordinated efforts of federal, state and local law enforcement officers in multiple jurisdictions have led to Thompson's criminal network being completely dismantled." Regarding the verdict on Baggett, Duke said, "We hope the verdict reinforces that federally-licensed firearms dealers play an important role in protecting the public and that any abuse of that trust will be prosecuted to the full extent of the law."

The United States presented evidence that Thompson possessed 147 firearms and approximately 85,000 rounds of ammunition. Thompson was also convicted of possessing at least one unregistered silencer. The guns, ammunition, and silencer have already been administratively forfeited by ATF.

Thompson was also convicted of operating an illegal gambling operation and conspiring to do the same. The following witnesses, who previously entered pleas of guilty to aiding and abetting in the operation of an illegal gambling business involving Thompson, included Dana Kuykendall, Mark Measel, Gene Baker, Jeff Clay, and Tony Milner. The parties agreed to resolve at a later bench trial whether over \$200,000 in alleged proceeds of an illegal gambling operation which was seized from George Thompson, will be forfeited.

Thompson's conviction for aiding and abetting the commission of marriage fraud was based on his role in orchestrating and accepting payment for a sham marriage for the purpose of gaining legal status for an Asian woman, who remains a fugitive.

In October of this year, Thompson was convicted of possessing with intent to deliver two kilograms of cocaine, and conspiring with Ralph Francis Deleo, the acting crime boss of the Colombo crime family, to do the same.

Baggett, a licensed federal firearms dealer at the time of the indictment, and Thompson were convicted of conspiring with each other to obtain ammunition for Thompson, who they knew was a felon.

Baggett was also convicted of aiding and abetting Thompson in possessing a firearm because Baggett sold Thompson's firearm for him knowing that Thompson was a felon. Finally, Baggett was convicted of making false statements to FBI and ATF agents regarding his sale of Thompson's firearm.

The maximum statutory penalties for a felon possessing firearms, a felon possessing ammunition, and possession of unregistered silencers are not more than 10 years imprisonment, not more than a \$250,000 fine, and not more than 3 years of supervised release. The maximum statutory penalty for operating an illegal gambling business, conspiring to do the same, and for aiding and abetting marriage fraud is not more than five years imprisonment, not more than a \$250,000 fine and not more than three years supervised release.

The maximum statutory penalty for aiding and abetting a felon in possessing a firearm is not more than 10 years imprisonment, not more than a \$250,000 fine, and no more than 3 years of supervised release. The maximum statutory penalty for conspiring to dispose of ammunition to a felon and for making a false statement is not more than 5 years imprisonment, not more than a \$250,000 fine, and not more than 1 year of supervised release.

The case was investigated by agents from the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms & Explosives, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Immigration & Customs Enforcement. The case was prosecuted by Laura G. Hoey, Patrick Harris, and Karen Whatley.

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